

MINUTES

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting: April 28, 2021

Present via Zoom: Jerry Cerasale, Chair; Steve Cole, Vice-Chair; Mary Shaw, Clerk; Russ French; Tom Gardner; Peter Wade; Jacqui Beebe, Town Administrator (joined about one hour in); Rich Bienvenue, Assistant Town Administrator/Finance Director; Art Autorino, Select Board Representative to Finance Committee; and guests Roy Merolli and Linda Culhane.

Absent: George Deptula, Rick Knight.

Jerry Cerasale called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Approval of Minutes

- Mary Shaw made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2021 meeting. Russ French seconded.
- **Roll call vote: 6-0**

Prior to moving to the agenda, Jerry Cerasale asked Jacqui Beebe whether Orleans had passed the plastic water bottle ban. Jacqui indicated she believed all towns surrounding Eastham have and that Sandwich was the most recent town that did.

Jerry Cerasale then asked Rich Bienvenue or Jacqui Beebe if there were any changes to Articles the Finance Committee voted on previously. Rich indicated there were not, so no re-votes are needed.

Continued Discussion and Voting Recommendations on Warrant Articles

Article 8 (Authorize Increase in Short-Term Rental Tax)

This Article was deferred at the previous meeting. Steve Cole indicated he believed the Select Board meeting and the new summary provided the clarity the Committee was looking for. Rich Bienvenue posted the summary.

- Steve Cole motioned to recommend to the Town that they approve Article 8; Mary Shaw seconded.
- **Roll call vote: 6-0**

Article 9A has been removed

Jerry Cerasale asked if it should have been retained in case there are problems with Article 9 that would leave residents of Thoreau Drive in the lurch. Rich Bienvenue indicates that Article 4 provides the funding for the existing Fund and Article 9 changes the ability to use that Fund for this utility purpose. Jacqui Beebe clarified that if Article 9 does not pass, there is no legal mechanism for the Town to assist the residents of Thoreau Drive.

Article 10 (Authorize Lease Term Up to 30 Years [N. Eastham] for Solar)

Jerry asked Rich Bienvenue or Jacqui Beebe to lead the discussion. There were five parcels listed in the prior draft. Rich eliminated those not needed in the new Warrant draft and also included a map to demonstrate we are considering no more than five acres and to indicate exactly where they are (adjacent to the Eversource right of way). On Friday, Rich took members of the Finance and Open Space Committees to walk the site and talk about the intention of the Article which is to give the Select Board the option to enter into a long-term lease, authority which they don't have without this Article. This enables the Select Board to issue RFPs and evaluate proposals. The process would involve interested parties in evaluating the RFPs that may be issued, as well as the responses. Rich also indicated he found a tool on the EPA website that shows the power generation from that site is equivalent to 1,200 acres of forest land.

Rich displayed the new Article and Jerry noted it eliminated parcels 5-19 and 5-20. In response to a question, Rich said the Article was updated to only include the grey section on the map, not the remaining acreage of the parcels. The map will be updated to show it goes over to the Eversource right of way. Peter Wade feels it is a bad precedent to clear forest for solar panels but this Article now minimizes the impact. Rich said that the Cape and Vineyard Electric Cooperative has creative ways to mitigate the environmental impact such as planting native grasses and wildflowers in and around solar arrays or planting trees in other areas that can be included in RFPs.

- Russ French motioned to recommend to the Town that they approve Article 10; Tom Gardner seconded.
- **Roll call vote: 6-0**

Article 11 (General Bylaw – Adopt MA Stretch Code Regulations)

In order to illustrate the difference between current and stretch codes, Jerry Cerasale asked if you wanted to build an Accessory Dwelling Unit today vs. waiting a year and coming under the Stretch Code, what would the differences be? Rich Bienvenue said that the Town Building Commissioner wrote a memo indicating that there are only nominal differences in cost since the standard building codes have been upgraded so much. Peter Wade says last sentence of summary is important because all of our neighboring and other communities have adopted this already. Peter remembers how onerous stretch codes used to be, but now the regular building codes have caught up and it no longer is a problem for builders.

- Peter Wade motioned to recommend to the Town that they approve Article 11; Russ French seconded.
- **Roll call vote: 6-0**

Article 12 (General Bylaw – Update Driving on the Beach)

Jacqui Beebe stated that both Article 12 and Article 13 are still being reviewed by Town Counsel. Jacqui indicated the Town is making one change to the Article 12, Section B which currently states "all operations on the beaches and flats located on the western shore of Eastham shall be prohibited during the months of June, July, August and September." The Town will add "with the exception of vehicles necessary for aquaculture grant holder access who have met the conditions of the Conservation Commission and have been duly permitted to drive at times and in places designated by the Town." This means aquaculture grant holders will have to apply for a

license from the Select Board, sign that they understand the orders and conditions, and the Town will each year pick dates and times when they can drive on the beach.

In response to a question, Jacqui said the Select Board had requested this change after being asked about it by the aquaculture grant holders. She is expecting the Select Board will vote on the final language on Monday night. In response to a question about Select Board unanimity on this Article, Art Autorino indicated he believes all Select Board members are in favor of it.

After discussion, Jerry Cerasale indicated that the Committee would **defer** voting on this Article until the regular May Finance Committee meeting and the moderator will announce the Committee's vote at Town Meeting since the May vote will not make it into the Warrant.

Article 13 (General Bylaw – Update Boating Regulations)

Rich Bienvenue had previously stated that Article 13 was split into two parts and both were sent to the Committee. This will be similar to Article 12 in that the Select Board has not yet voted and may make changes. Again the Committee discussed and determined it will **defer** and vote on this Article in the regular May meeting as well.

Discussion and Vote on Finance Committee Warrant Letter

Jerry Cerasale sent around a draft Finance Committee Warrant Letter. Various Committee members made suggestions for language changes which were made after discussion. The Committee then discussed whether to address Articles voted on today.

Article 8 (Increase Room Excise Tax) – Steve Cole thinks the Finance Committee must address a new tax. Rich Bienvenue shared Steve's draft on the screen. The draft explains what the Article is doing, what's its revenue impact would be and then it relies on the summary to indicate that the Select Board will look into the precise programs these revenues would support and examples of what they are. With one word change, the Committee decided to include it as drafted.

Article 10 (Solar Lease) and Article 11 (Stretch Code) – The Committee decided not to address these Articles in their letter.

- Russ French motioned to accept the Finance Committee Letter as amended in this meeting; Steve Cole seconded.
- **Roll call vote: 6-0**

New Business

Jacqui Beebe indicated the Town is struggling through the regulatory process for the Rock Harbor project. She anticipates we will prevail with a successful application. In response to questions, Jacqui said there is no update on the review of the Town Charter and that the wastewater consultants have sent the first three chapters of their report which is primarily a historical review.

Mary Shaw said that the Strategic Planning Committee will develop a brochure to insert into the Warrant vs. the usual letter.

The next meeting will be the regularly scheduled May Finance Committee Meeting.

Adjournment:

As there was no additional new business, Steve Cole motioned to adjourn the meeting; Tom Gardner seconded.

- **Roll call vote: 6-0**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Erdos